

Final Minutes
Meeting of 1/24/07

**ARIZONA STATE PARKS
NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(NAPAC)**

Minutes of the meeting held:
Wednesday, January 24, 2006
At the offices of: Arizona State Parks
1300 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Hare called the meeting to order at 12:09pm. The following people were present, and the Committee achieved a quorum.

Committee Members Present: Trevor Hare, Chair
Sheridan Stone, Vice-Chair
Linda Kennedy
John Hays
Ken Kingsley
Phyllis Hughes
Don Young
Max Castillo, *ex officio*

Committee Members Absent: None

Other Individuals Present: Dan Shein, Arizona State Parks
Joanne Roberts, Arizona State Parks
Ray Warriner, Arizona State Parks
Joy Hernbrode, Assistant Attorney General
representing Arizona State Parks
Nathan Fidel, Attorney General's Office
Ruth Shulman, Arizona State Parks

Guests: Dr. Paul Beier, NAU

B. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS AND STAFF

Members and Staff introduced themselves.

C. NEW BUSINESS

1. New Member Orientation

New members of NAPAC were provided with information on the Committee, as well as legal and administrative information.

Ms. Shulman discussed establishing a quorum for the meeting, how meeting agendas and other documents are disseminated, and travel reimbursement procedures along with other administrative topics.

Ms. Roberts gave a PowerPoint presentation on the history, mission and vision of Arizona State Parks (ASP) and NAPAC. She also discussed NAPAC's role alongside the Resource Management group of Arizona State Parks. Mr. Young asked Ms. Roberts whether Kartchner Caverns State Park was a designated Natural Area. Ms. Roberts replied that parts of the park were unofficially so designated. The state's auditor general has said that designated Natural Areas within existing state parks are ineligible for funds for any purpose but management plans.

Mr. Warriner also gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Verde River Greenway (VRG), from a property acquisition perspective. He covered the history of the project, and discussed the recent mandate by the ASP Board to extend the Greenway beyond its original six-mile scope. Some property has already been purchased in the expansion area, and further properties are being considered.

Ms. Hernbrode covered the Open Meeting Law and Conflict of Interest as they pertain to the advisory groups for the ASP Board. The Open Meeting Law guides how meeting dates, topics and locations are communicated to the public, communication between members outside of a quorum, and in general ways to maintain public transparency regarding the business of the Committee. The Conflict of Interest rules steer individual committee members through various ethical situations. Ms. Hernbrode also advised the committee of her role providing legal advice to ASP, the ASP Board, and to NAPAC.

Mr. Shein noted that, when proposing topics for the meeting agenda, members should be as specific and complete as possible. In addition, when formulating motions before the Committee, members should be likewise specific.

(The Committee adjourned at 2:05 for a brief break and reconvened at 2:23pm.)

2. Presentation and Discussion with Dr. Paul Beier re: Arizona Missing Linkages.

Dr. Beier gave a PowerPoint presentation (copy available) on the Arizona Missing Linkages. The group began in 2003 and addresses wildlife connectivity throughout Arizona in partnership with the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), the US Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Northern Arizona University (NAU) and the Federal Highway Administration. These

partners met at the Phoenix Zoo in 2004. There was a report that identified 100 potential linkages published by ADOT in December 2006 in a limited press run. The document is *The Arizona Wildlife Linkage Assessment* and is available through ADOT. The primary functions of the Arizona Missing Linkages are to: define linkages and identify issues with multi-jurisdictional ownership; select focal species and prioritize within the landscape; and conduct GIS analysis and determine optimum biologic corridors. Field work is conducted to identify restoration opportunities and prepare comprehensive plans that consider development planning (lights, roads, zoning, etc.). The idea is to move beyond mitigation into actually improving wildlife crossing at highways and freeways. Dr. Beier examples of successful implementation of the wildlife corridor design program in California, and recommended a freeware tool available to GIS users at www.corridordesign.org.

Chair Hare asked if information on wildlife corridors for the Santa Rita/Tumacacori area is available, where NAPAC has an interest. Dr. Beier said that reports for those areas will be available as soon as they are reviewed by AGFD. Dr. Young asked what arrangements, if any, are made for the “out-lyer” species in an area. Dr. Beier said the optimum output is considered during the planning process and the decision are made to incorporate the optimum. Compromises generally need to be made during implementation. The design software used by the group can generate alternate plans and those plans are compared when making any decisions.

Dr. Kingsley asked how plants and invertebrates figure in the overall linkage design. Dr. Beier responded that vegetation and invertebrates are taken into account as far as suitable habitat, but that movement (e.g. seed dispersal in plants) patterns are difficult to track. The designs try to overlay known or potential patterns.

Ms. Hughes asked about the scope of the organization: local, regional, or national, and how authorities play a part. Dr. Beier said that the idea of designed wildlife corridors is part of a large national effort, and that it is just beginning in Arizona.

Further questions addressed the international border linkages, and the VRG. Linkages for the southern border have not been incorporated yet, but workgroup discussions are underway. For the VRG, the Clarkdale to Camp Verde corridor linkage is among the first eight plans for Arizona. The draft plans can be viewed at www.corridordesign.org.

3. Desert Southwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) Presentation and Discussion.

Dr. Casavant, who was to have made the presentation, was not present. Ms. Roberts provided some background information on the overall concept of the CESUs around the state. The CESUs are a set of cooperative groups of research science oriented land managers and scientists. Resources, including financial and human, are pooled by the CESUs. Joining a CESU costs a certain amount of money, and at one time the agency wanted to join the groups housed at NAU and U of A. Membership is only open on a schedule. Membership would assist with management in parks and Natural

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Areas. Dr. Casavant is working with the University of Arizona. Joining CESUs would also be a source of information, discussion and knowledge-sharing on the various regional issues around the state. Additionally, resources can be pooled. Mr. Stone had a copy of an old folder of information on Northern Arizona DCEU that he shared with the Committee.

4. Distribution of Proposed Research Project for Control of Russian Knapweed

Ms. Roberts handed out copies of a proposal to conduct research at Dead Horse Ranch State Park to control Russian Knapweed, an invasive species. Ms. Roberts requested that comments on the proposal be sent to her prior to the February NAPAC meeting. The Committee held no discussion. The proposal will be reviewed and discussed at the February NAPAC meeting.

D. OLD BUSINESS

1. Approval of NAPAC minutes for the November 29, 2006 meeting.

Ms. Hughes noted that a correction to “National Environmental Policy Act” was needed on page six. Ms. Hernbrode suggested changing Nathan Fidel’s affiliation to “Attorney General’s office”. In the final version of the Vision Statement, a minor correction was needed.

Dr. Kennedy moved that the minutes be approved as amended. Mr. Hays seconded the motion, which carried with no further discussion.

2. Set calendar for 2007 meetings, including places, times and dates.

The Committee agreed on the following dates for the near future:

February 22, 2007, in Casa Grande, meeting time at 12:00pm

March 22, 2007, in Tucson, meeting time at 12:00pm

April 26, 2007, in Phoenix, meeting time at 12:00pm.

Ms. Roberts suggested that if the subcommittees assumed a more active role in the business of the Committee, the number of full Committee meetings during the upcoming year could be reduced. Chair Hare asked Ms. Roberts to create a proposal for planning more subcommittee meetings. Subcommittee meetings could be held in various areas of the state.

3. Discussion of proposed Natural Area acquisitions near Oracle State Park: COD Ranch and Huggett Properties.

Mr. Warriner said that there had been no change in the status of either property since the last NAPAC meeting; both properties remain on the market. Funding for the purchase remains an issue if either property is not designated as a Natural Area. Mr. Warriner said that there are very preliminary discussions underway for the University of Arizona to develop an elder hostel at COD, but there are no other purchasers in sight.

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The property evaluation was completed after the site visit, so the opinions of the Committee are available. Ms. Roberts noted that there are no threatened and/or endangered species documented on the properties of interest, or listed for the area. The USFS is enthusiastic for Parks to purchase the property, as they will be developing a firescape program. A single contact for the USFS would make developing the program much easier for them.

As noted last time, the back taxes are an issue for the Huggett property, and the potential for the County to rezone the land for development looms large. The USFS fire managers are aware of this possibility.

Ms. Roberts also mentioned having received monitoring reports for 2005 and 2006 for the Huggett properties, however those reports are limited to reporting disturbances. There have been no surveys of vegetation, birds or other wildlife. The conservation easement that exists was placed on the land due to its being considered a wildlife corridor, so there is a potential mesh with Dr. Beier's program, especially if they've reviewed the property and made a decision on its importance.

Chair Hare said that the property had been reviewed by the Missing Linkage Organization, but not contracted to have a design done. He also said that he felt the property was important for the well-rounded representation of vegetation types. He asked Mr. Warriner if he had discovered whether the property was available for the tax liability payment alone.

Mr. Warriner said he had asked the property-owner's attorney, and not gotten an answer. He will press the issue and also get an amount for the liability. There are also some issues surrounding the ability to pay for an appraisal, which ASP would need to buy the property, if it will not be designated a Natural Area. Mr. Young asked if the appraisal were necessary if ASP bought the property only for the tax liability. Ms. Hernbrode said that an appraisal would still be necessary. Further discussion ensued on the conservation easement and the value of the property.

Chair Hare asked if the Executive Staff of ASP had discussed designating all of Oracle State Park as a Natural Area. Mr. Warriner said that the Executive Staff had likely not discussed it, as their focus for much of their time is the Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations around the state. He reminded the Committee that other avenues are being explored, Dr. Kennedy asked in which County the properties were located. Chair Hare replied that it was located in Pinal County. There was further discussion on development in Pinal County, and the likelihood that housing tract could eventually encircle any Natural Area, so that it could be a buffer, or an anchor.

Ms. Roberts mentioned that she discussed with Oracle State Park's staff what site specific natural resource data was available for OSP. A management plan for Oracle was also discussed, and there are a number of deed restrictions as to what is possible to be done on the property. Ms. Hernbrode said that there is a memo available

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outlining the deed restrictions, but it was not available in time to make the agenda for this meeting. Ms. Hernbrode noted that deed restrictions often stipulate that the property will revert to the previous owner if the restrictions are violated. A conservation easement does not contain that stipulation.

(Mr. Hays left the meeting at this time.)

Mr. Stone noted that he felt the properties would be eligible to serve as buffer zones, and in that case, the actual “contents” would be less of a focus over the context of the property. There should be a focus on the existing State Park. He asked what the USFS would like the landscape to look like; whether there would be ecological burns, or fuel reduction burns.

He also asked if the COD Ranch’s mercantile vision were pursued, would the profits be available for Natural Area’s use only. Mr. Warriner noted that the funds would go to a State Park’s fund, and that a change to the statute would be necessary to designate the funds for Natural Area’s use.

Ms. Roberts said that the firescape plan was in its infancy, but there is a draft management fire plan in the comment phase now. Several interested regional partners are going to attend a meeting on firescapes in March. More information will be available. Mr. Castillo asked how a firescape program would fit into a Natural Area management plan. Ms. Roberts noted that the draft management plan was going to be amended to add fire plans. Further discussion on fire plans followed. The Committee would appreciate seeing the plan when it finalizes. Mr. Stone also says that the history of the property as far as being a grassland zone or a woodland zone historically would be important.

4. Distribution of McGrew Springs synthesis document.

Ms. Roberts handed out copies of the synthesis document regarding the evaluation visit to McGrew Springs held in December. The Committee held no discussion. The evaluation will be reviewed and discussed at the February NAPAC meeting.

E. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Natural Areas Management Guidelines (NAMG) committee: Update and report on progress. Chair Hare said that a guidelines document is available, but it needs to be updated and expanded. Comments are due to Ms. Roberts, and once received they will be incorporated into the document before the document is forwarded to the new members. Subcommittee members are: Sheridan Stone, Trevor Hare, Joanne Roberts, and Max Castillo in an advisory capacity. Janet Hawk, the Chief of Operations for ASP also provides comment for an operations view. New information on operational rules will be included in the next iteration of the document.

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Chair Hare noted that new members would not have to make a snap decision on whether to participate in a subcommittee, or in which one to participate. There will be a new packet of information on the NAMG out soon that will help new members make that decision.

2. Update on the interim San Rafael State Natural Area (SRSNA) Management Plan materials, report and discussion if necessary. Chair Hare noted that the members of this subcommittee are: Lee Eseman (Manager of the SRSNA), Sheridan Stone, Linda Kennedy, Joanne Roberts and himself. Ms. Roberts noted that the ASP Board had provided some guidance on the direction of the park when asked in 2005, and a draft natural resources management plan will continue in that direction. Funds remain unavailable to develop the management plan to include natural, cultural and recreation resources. At the minimum, the plan under consideration by the subcommittee should focus on the management of the riparian and grassland areas, in order to provide direction to Ms. Eseman. This plan would need to be approved by the ASP Board. The project is enormous, and there has been a limited amount of time available in the past year working with the sub-committee. The University of Arizona may be able to provide some assistance in the way of students. This might be accomplished with a smaller budget that could be approved by the ASP Board.

Ms. Roberts says that she has a meeting with Doug Duncan of the USFWS on January 25. The processes and abilities in turning out a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) will be on the table to discuss. Mr. Duncan had offered his assistance with an HCP in the past, and he has also been in contact with the owner of the easement property as far as developing an HCP for the easement property. Chair Hare said that Section Six funds from the Endangered Species Act may be available for habitat management plans. There was discussion on the various species that would help ASP qualify for those funds.

Ms. Roberts said that various surveys and species monitoring has not been very expansive. Dr. Kennedy noted that the Audubon is working to name the Santa Cruz river area as an Important Bird Area.

Chair Hare asked if documents would be ready to be disseminated. Ms. Roberts said that is not the case. Chair Hare asked if volunteers to the subcommittee would review the documents when they come around.

3. Update on Verde River Greenway – Report on the next steps in CAP Planning process.

Ms. Roberts said that the time commitments have wrought some havoc on updating the management plan. The current plan is from 1994, and is not useful for managing a Natural Area. The initial TNC CAP planning meeting, with Dale Turner as facilitator, took place in September, and provided a good “straw man” for the new management plan. However,

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scheduling conflicts have prevented a follow-up meeting so far. The process should be reinitiated at this point.

Chair Hare noted that Max Castillo, Ray Warriner and Joanne Roberts are the only members of the subcommittee at this time. Mr. Shein noted that the VRG is a focus for the ASP Board, and that logistically the subcommittee would be the best way to do property evaluations in the area. He would encourage strong participation on that subcommittee.

Dr. Kingsley noted that he would be interested, but does need some further information before he makes a final decision.

Ms. Roberts noted that in 2005 there was a Land Acquisition subcommittee met to review and consider properties, and did the evaluations. This information was then brought back to the main Committee. The process would help the Committee form decisions about property purchases to present to the ASP Board on a timely basis.

Ms. Hughes noted that she is not able to see the “big picture” of Natural Areas from the material that was provided today. She would like to see a “Natural Areas 101” presentation to help her understand more of the process of prioritizing properties, what criteria are used to consider properties, how the Committee becomes aware of available properties, and so on.

Ms. Roberts said that there is a priority list of properties that requires updating. The process so far is that Mr. Warriner becomes aware of a property by whatever means, including through ASP staff. The project areas are prioritized, so that is where the focus has been so far. Ms. Roberts will also be bringing some items back to the Committee as far as prioritization and process for acquiring Natural Areas because there is finite time and limited staff to accomplish what were prioritized in the past years.

Mr. Stone said that so far the process is there, but it is not rigorous. Some information is a decade old. He would like to structure an agenda item, perhaps a recurring item or several agenda “modules”, to systematize the prioritization process.

The Committee decided to schedule time on future agendas for this topic, and ideas on the structure of that item.

F. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

G. BOARD COMMENTS, REQUESTS, AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Items for future agendas: Ms. Hernbrode memo outlining the deed restrictions on Oracle State Park; CESUs; COD Ranch/Huggett properties; Amy Racki to update on the progress of the OHV legislation (this item for either February or March, depending on Ms. Racki's schedule and the legislation's progress); a short presentation on Picacho Peak; Mr. Warriner to provide a list of potential Natural Areas proposed purchases, staff review of the 1999 proposed and designation-pending Natural Areas as well as the Natural Areas within existing parks; Lone Mountain Ranch update; a "Natural Areas 101" presentation to help get new members up to speed; an item to discuss a systematized process for prioritization of property selection, prioritization, evaluation and designation of Natural Areas; a budget discussion.

H. TIME AND PLACE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

February 22, 2007, Casa Grande, 12:00pm
March 22, 2007, Tucson, 12:00pm
April 26, 2007, Phoenix, 12:00pm.

I. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Hare declared the meeting adjourned at 3:50pm.

Prepared by Ruth Shulman on January 31, 2007, and reviewed by Joanne M. Roberts, Arizona State Parks NAPAC Coordinator, on February 6, 2007.

APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 22, 2007.

Affirmed by:

/s/ Trevor Hare
Trevor Hare, Chair

Date: February 22, 2007